

Council Member Defends His Financial Record

I had to shake my head at my colleague Steven A. Silverman's description of my advocacy for lower property tax rates and curbing non-essential government spending as a "complete turnaround" [Montgomery Extra, Dec. 16]. Maybe he thinks one can't be both a progressive and be responsible with taxpayers' money. I disagree.

That's why I voted in 1999 to reduce the property tax rate to stay at the charter limit and opposed spending more than half a million dollars on preserving a non-historic barn at the South Germantown Recreational Park (mine was the only vote against it on the council). I worked to require County Executive Douglas M. Duncan (D) to re-negotiate a mixed-paper recycling contract so that the county wouldn't waste millions paying to guarantee tonnage levels that council staff members correctly warned council members would be unachievable for years.



STEVE SILVERMAN



PHIL ANDREWS

Council member Silverman (D-At Large) also should recall that the first bill I sponsored that became law, in 2000, prohibited the county from charging a fee to homeowners who pay their property taxes semi-annually. Perhaps he forgot that I led the effort in 2003 that saved the county's inspector general from elimination. And I am the only current council member who has never proposed a community grant because the application and selection process lacks the most basic safeguards against political manipulation.

My views and votes on taxes have remained constant. I support raising more funds through in-

come taxes than from property taxes because income taxes better reflect people's ability to pay, and significant increases in property taxes are often a hardship to homeowners on fixed incomes. That's why I voted to raise the income tax rate in 2003 but have consistently voted (and led the successful effort this year) to lower the property tax rate.

As for the recently approved bill to allow several county government unions to pull their members' deferred compensation funds out of the county plan and manage their own, the measure was anti-consumer because it weakens the bargaining power of the county to get the best deal for all employees and retirees. It will probably result in higher fees for both union and non-union plan participants.

There is no conflict in being both progressive and fiscally responsible, and I'll continue to be both.

PHIL ANDREWS
*Democratic council member
Gaithersburg*